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## The End of Naval Disarmament

BY DAVID H. POPPER

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# The End of Naval Disarmament

BY DAVID H. POPPER

*with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association*

ITALY'S sudden challenge to British sea power in the Mediterranean has again turned the attention of the world to the possibility of a great naval war. This challenge is the result of a European naval race which has been largely overshadowed by the play of national rivalries in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> Now, if only temporarily, the emphasis has shifted to Europe. While the Far Eastern situation still retains its essential elements of conflict, the center of naval activity has for the moment become the Atlantic area, the North Sea and the Mediterranean.

Meanwhile, as the period for holding the 1935 naval conference scheduled in the London Naval Treaty draws to a close, a series of events points to the improbability of continuing naval limi-

tation after the end of 1936.<sup>2</sup> Japan, convinced of the impossibility of increasing its relative naval strength by agreement with the United States and Great Britain, denounced the Washington Naval Treaty on December 29, 1934.<sup>3</sup> Not long after Hitler had proclaimed Germany's freedom to rearm on March 16, 1935, it was revealed that the German navy had already been strengthened without regard to the restricting provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. When the Reich's construction was given British sanction in the Anglo-German naval agreement of June 18, 1935, France declared it was resuming liberty of action in the field of naval armament. On July 22, 1935 Great Britain served notice it had abandoned the possibility of limitation by

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means of ratios. Meanwhile, the United States remained inflexibly determined to increase its fleet to treaty strength by 1942;<sup>4</sup> and on September 27, 1935 President Roosevelt pledged the United States to maintain under all circumstances the ratio of strength provided by the treaties.<sup>5</sup>

This gradual surrender of all hopes for naval limitation can be properly evaluated only if it is realized that armies and navies constitute essential elements of foreign policy. The objectives of policy and the strength of armed might may be said to stand in reciprocal relation. To some extent, each determines the other; and both are in turn evolved from certain constant geographic and economic factors.

## THE NAVAL SITUATION IN EUROPE

The preoccupation with naval affairs manifested by Great Britain, the United States and Japan in the earlier post-war years was not shared by the Continental countries, which in most cases considered naval armament secondary to preparedness on land. With the German navy shorn of its power by the Treaty of Versailles and the Russian fleet a negligible factor, France and Italy became the predominant Continental naval powers. Even these navies, neglected during the war, were in relatively poor condition.<sup>6</sup> Under the Washington Naval Treaty, the two Latin powers were allotted capital-ship tonnage in the ratio of 1.75 to 5 for Britain and the United States, but considerations of econ-

omy and strategic necessity were such that no capital ship was laid down on the European Continent for over ten years after the war.<sup>7</sup> Instead, France and Italy turned to the construction of smaller vessels, particularly cruisers.<sup>8</sup> For a time their weakness in these categories enabled Britain, its traditional European two-power standard secure, to devote its energies to the solution of Pacific naval problems. After vain attempts to induce Paris and Rome to limit the number of these vessels, the British eventually felt themselves forced to insert in the Treaty of London the famous "escalator clause," which allowed Britain to increase its auxiliary tonnage if the Continental navies greatly increased theirs.<sup>9</sup>

Franco-Italian naval rivalry is rooted in conflicting national policies and considerations of prestige. Behind the French refusal to extend the concept of parity with Italy from capital ships to smaller vessels<sup>10</sup> lies the insistence that France's two non-contiguous coasts and its North African colonies, with their vital man-power and resources, must be protected by a navy stronger than that of any other Mediterranean power. Since it does not consider the British Empire an opponent, France has maintained its navy at a level almost exactly equivalent to the combined strength of Italy and Germany, its potential enemies.<sup>11</sup> French naval authorities have, accordingly, built up an unsurpassed submarine fleet and a powerful force of flotilla vessels—cruisers, light cruisers, flotilla leaders and destroyers—to defend their coasts against enemy navies and to provide safe convoy for the African ship services.<sup>12</sup>

1. Cf. W. T. Stone, "Impending Naval Rivalry," *Foreign Policy Reports*, April 11, 1934.

2. The Washington-London treaty structure expires on December 31, 1936. Part V, Article 23, of the Treaty of London provides that a conference shall be held in 1935 to frame a new treaty of naval limitation. U. S., Department of State, "Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armament: Treaty between the United States of America and Other Powers," *Treaty Series*, No. 830 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 28.

3. For text of the denunciation, cf. State Department, *Press Releases*, December 30, 1934.

4. Under the terms of the Vinson Act, 73rd Congress, 2nd session, *Public Law No. 135*, approved March 27, 1934.

5. *New York Times*, September 28, 1935.

6. For a description of the poor state of French naval material after the war, cf. France, Chambre des députés, session de 1934, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances chargée d'examiner le projet de loi portant fixation du budget général de l'exercice 1935 (Marine)* (Paris, Imprimerie de la chambre des députés, 1934), p. 9. Both France and Italy permitted their tonnage to decrease during the war years. Stone, "Impending Naval Rivalry," cited.

7. A capital ship, according to the definition accepted at the Washington Conference, is "a vessel of war, not an aircraft carrier, whose displacement exceeds 10,000 tons standard displacement, or which carries a gun with a calibre exceeding 8 inches." *Conference on the Limitation of Armament* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 1600.

8. For construction figures by years, cf. United States, House of Representatives, *Hearing before Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations in charge of Navy Department Appropriation Bill for 1936*, 74th Congress, 1st session (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1935), table facing p. 78.

9. U. S., Department of State, "Treaty between the United States of America and Other Powers," cited, Article 21, p. 26.

10. A stand taken in a reservation to the treaty of Washington and maintained ever since. Cf. France, Chambre des députés, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances*, cited, pp. 12-19.

11. At the beginning of 1935 Italy and Germany possessed total tonnage in service as follows:

Italy	395,522
Germany	159,190
Combined strength	554,712
France	555,042

League of Nations, *Armaments Year-Book*, 1935, C.89.40-1935.IX. (Geneva, 1935), pp. 1010, 1013, 1018.

12. Should France lose control of the trans-Mediterranean route at a critical moment—for example, when hostilities with Germany necessitate concentration of the fleet in the Atlantic—the alternate Atlantic route from Morocco to Bordeaux would apparently be used. French military experts have been considering the protection of this line of communication. Cf. *L'Afrique Française* (Paris), January 1935, pp. 38-39.

The Italian government, for its part, has stoutly adhered to its claim for a navy equal to that of the French. Italians justify their position by citing the length of their Mediterranean coast line, Italy's vital dependence on the sea for its economic sustenance, and the lack of outlying naval bases to protect its foreign commerce.<sup>13</sup> Italian aspirations to naval parity have taken shape in the construction of a powerful cruiser force which virtually equals that of France. Between 1922 and 1935 Italy laid down 138,900 tons in cruisers, while the French have put 143,250 tons on the ways. Each has built seven 10,000-ton cruisers armed with 8-inch guns.<sup>14</sup>

The recent Franco-Italian rapprochement, signalized by the Rome Accord of January 7, 1935, was accompanied by colonial concessions to Italy which did much to assuage the bitterness between the two countries.<sup>15</sup> It failed, however, to include any agreement on naval questions. As between France and Italy, naval issues were temporarily thrust into the background; but the growing sea power of Germany made any talk of limitation superfluous.

#### CAPITAL SHIP COMPETITION

Germany became a factor in European naval strategy long before the advent of the Nazi régime. Unhampered by the qualitative restrictions of the Treaty of Washington, German naval engineers were able to build the *Deutschland*, a vessel regarded by the French as a real threat to their maritime position.<sup>16</sup> The *Deutschland* was launched in 1931 as a 10,000-ton vessel with 11-inch guns, a speed of 26 knots, and armor superior to that of the treaty cruisers built to meet the specifications of the Treaty of Washington. It embodies numerous new developments, including Diesel engines which give it a remarkable radius of action, and was produced at the enormously high cost of £375 per ton—a proof of extreme care in construction.<sup>17</sup> More powerfully armed and more strongly defended than a cruiser, this new ship is swift enough to escape an enemy battleship.<sup>18</sup> Two other vessels of this type will shortly be in service. Meanwhile,

France has clearly indicated its determination to preserve a margin of superiority over the Reich by beginning the construction of two 26,500-ton battle cruisers mounting 13.2-inch guns and capable of doing 29.5 knots. The *Dunkerque*, the first of this class, was laid down in October 1932; a sister ship, the *Strasbourg*, was begun in September 1934.<sup>19</sup> Not to be outdone, Mussolini has undertaken the construction of two 35,000-ton battleships, the *Vittorio Veneto* and the *Littorio*,<sup>20</sup> although most naval experts are dubious of the value of ships of this size in the narrow seas surrounding Italy. The French government again countered by the announcement of plans for two more vessels of 35,000 tons. One of these was to be started as soon as the *Dunkerque* had been launched, while parts will be fabricated in advance for the second, which cannot be laid down until the naval treaties expire.<sup>21</sup> Despite lack of detailed information regarding the new ships, it is agreed that with their technical improvements they will be unsurpassed on the sea.<sup>22</sup>

#### ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT

These developments on the Continent appear to render British capital-ship construction inevitable, if only for replacement purposes. Since Britain is pledged to refrain from battleship-building until after 1936, it is obvious that the Empire cannot regain its relative supremacy in Europe before 1941. Swift cruisers, large submarine fleets and powerful air forces meanwhile threaten the control of the sea which is vital for the British Isles in an emergency. The critical situation in the Mediterranean has emphatically brought home to the British public the fact that these modern weapons render command of narrow waters by a fleet far more difficult than in the past. For example, the British navy—once secure under the protection of the powerful naval base at Malta—is now confronted by Italian

13. For a statement of the Italian case for sea power, cf. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, *Sea Power in the Modern World* (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1934), pp. 201-08.

14. Cf. Great Britain, Admiralty, *Fleets of the British Commonwealth of Nations and Foreign Countries* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1935), Cmd. 4817, pp. 17-20.

15. Vera Micheles Dean, "Europe's Struggle for Security," *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 19, 1935.

16. The displacement of Germany's new battleships is fixed by the Treaty of Versailles at 10,000 tons, but no limit is placed on gun calibre.

17. *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1934* (London, Low, Marston and Co., 1934), p. 224.

18. German ingenuity has also been employed to build light cruisers of 6,000 tons each, regarded as extraordinarily fine ships by naval experts. Cf. F. Russell Bichowsky, *Is the Navy Ready?* (New York, Vanguard, 1935), p. 14.

19. *Correspondance Diplomatique Internationale* (Paris), August 12, 1935, p. 3. The *Dunkerque* was launched October 2, 1935. *New York Times*, October 3, 1935.

20. Laid down October 28, 1934. Cf. *Jane's Fighting Ships*, cited, p. 256.

21. Cf. France, Chambre des députés, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances*, cited, p. 57. Extensive pre-fabrication of parts, a development introduced by Germany, is expected to shorten considerably the customary four-year period necessary for building a battleship. U. S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, September 1935, p. 1327.

22. *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual, 1935* (London, Clowes, 1935), p. 29.



naval and air power in the Central Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup> Moves toward Turkish rearmament in the East<sup>24</sup> and Spanish naval activity in the West<sup>25</sup> further complicate the situation.

To the United Kingdom the threat of German rearmament is equally disturbing. If necessary, British shipping may round the Cape of Good Hope or pass through the Panama Canal to reach the East; but the Channel, the North Sea and the homeland must be defended under all circumstances. The country was consequently thrown into a furor in April 1935 when the British government announced that the Reich was undertaking the construction of twelve 250-ton submarines.<sup>26</sup> Apparently imperilled by sea as well as by air, London for a time seemed prepared to abandon its balance of power policy and side with France and Italy in the attempt to array an overwhelming force against the Nazis. Both Britain and Germany, however, desired to avoid a naval race reminiscent of that in which they were engaged before 1914. A widely publicized offer to limit the Reich navy to 35 per cent of the British sea strength, which Hitler made in his Reichstag address on foreign policy May 21, 1935, met with prompt response from Britain.<sup>27</sup> Negotiations between Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's representative on disarmament questions, and the British government began on June 4; and in a fortnight the two governments reached a "permanent and definite agreement" embodied in an exchange of notes published on June 18. In order to "facilitate the conclusion of a general agreement on the subject of naval limitation" the two governments agreed that:

"... the ratio of 35 to 100 is to be a permanent relationship; that is, the total tonnage of the German fleet shall never exceed the percentage of 35 of the aggregate of actual tonnages of members of the British Commonwealth of Nations . . . .

"... Germany will adhere to the ratio 35 to 100 in all circumstances; that is, the ratio will not be affected by the construction of other Powers. If the general equilibrium of naval armaments, as normally maintained in the past, should be violently upset by any abnormal and exceptional construction by other Powers, the German Government reserve the right to in-

vite His Majesty's Government to examine the new situation thus created . . . .

"... in principle, . . . the German Government are prepared to apply the 35 per cent ratio to tonnage of each category of vessel to be maintained and make any variation of this ratio in a particular category or categories dependent on arrangements to this end that may be arrived at in a future general treaty on naval limitation, such arrangements being based on the principle that any increase in one category would be compensated for by a corresponding reduction in others. If no general treaty on naval limitation should be concluded or if a future general treaty should not contain a provision creating limitation by categories, the manner and degree in which the German Government will have the right to vary the 35 per cent ratio in one or more categories will be a matter for settlement by agreement between the German Government and His Majesty's Government in the light of the naval situation then existing . . . .

"... If and for so long as other important naval Powers retain a single category for cruisers and destroyers, Germany shall enjoy the right to have a single category for these two classes of vessels, although she would prefer to see these classes in two categories.

"... In the matter of submarines, however, Germany, while not exceeding the ratio 35 to 100 in respect to total tonnage, shall have the right to possess submarine tonnage equal to the total submarine tonnage possessed by members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The German Government, however, undertake that, except in circumstances indicated in the immediately following sentence, Germany's submarine tonnage shall not exceed 45 per cent of the total of that possessed by the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The German Government reserve the right, in the event of a situation arising which in their opinion makes it necessary for Germany to avail herself of her right to a percentage of submarine tonnage exceeding the 45 per cent above mentioned, to give notice to this effect to His Majesty's Government, and agree that the matter shall be the subject of friendly discussion before the German Government exercise that right . . . .

"... the 35 to 100 ratio will be maintained in default of agreement to the contrary between the two governments."<sup>28</sup>

This agreement—which met Germany's principal demands—fixes the total German naval strength in relation to that of the British Empire regardless of developments in other fleets, unless both powers should agree to revise the ratio. For each category of vessels, moreover, the German government is

23. Malta is too close to Italian air bases safely to shelter a large naval force.

24. Cf. *Current History*, July 1935, p. 442.

25. Spain's five-year program for naval construction and fortification of the Balearics, presented to the Cortes on March 12, 1935, involves the expenditure of 447.5 million pesetas. For details, cf. *L'Afrique Française* (Paris), April 1935, p. 249.

26. *The Times* (London), April 28, 30, 1935.

27. *Voelkischer Beobachter*, May 22, 1935.

28. Great Britain, *Exchange of Notes between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the German Government regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1935), Cmd. 4930.

pledged to abide by the 35 per cent ratio; should a change be sanctioned in a general naval treaty or by agreement between the two governments, a relative increase in one category would be matched by a corresponding reduction in others. The special arrangement for submarine tonnage is apparently a result of the fact that the French submarine force is the largest in the world, and that 35 per cent of British strength would not in itself constitute a sufficient ratio with respect to that of France.<sup>29</sup> To allay apprehension of a future German submarine menace, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, First Lord of the Admiralty, told the House of Commons on June 25 that the German representatives had "... stated that Germany is prepared to adhere to the rules regarding submarine warfare as set out in Part IV of the London Naval Treaty, and to accept them for herself irrespective of whether they are adhered to by all other powers."<sup>30</sup>

## A GERMAN NAVAL RENAISSANCE

Although characterized by the British as a measure facilitating the conclusion of a naval disarmament agreement, the Anglo-German naval agreement at one stroke almost tripled the naval tonnage permitted to Germany. The Reich may now increase the strength of its navy, rated at 159,190 tons at the end of 1934,<sup>32</sup> to a total of 420,595 tons and build a capital-ship force equal to those of France or Italy under the treaties. The German naval authorities evidently intend to scrap over-age tonnage and build the new fleet around the nucleus provided by their modern vessels.<sup>33</sup> It is to be noted that the 107,000 tons to be laid down under the building program adopted for 1935 is equivalent to almost twice the modern tonnage now in service. No power has equalled this volume of fighting craft construction in any single year since the Washington Naval Treaty went into effect.<sup>34</sup>

## GERMAN NAVAL STRENGTHS\*

	Total built		Total building Jan. 1, 1935	Total permitted under new agreement	1935 building program under new agreement	
	Under-age	Over-age			No.	Tons
Capital ships	20,000	78,084	10,000 <sup>2</sup>	183,750	2	52,000
Aircraft carriers <sup>1</sup>	.....	.....	.....	47,250	.....	.....
Cruisers	30,000	10,040	6,000 <sup>3</sup>	118,650 <sup>4</sup>	2	20,000
Destroyers and torpedo boats	9,600	13,491	.....	52,500	16	26,000
Submarines <sup>1</sup>	500	.....	.....	18,445 <sup>5</sup>	28	9,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60,100</b>	<b>101,615</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>420,595</b>		<b>107,000</b>

\*Sources: League of Nations, *Armaments Year-Book*, 1935, cited, p. 1013; *Voelkischer Beobachter*, June 21, July 9, 1935; Office of Naval Intelligence, Washington, July 24, 1935.

1. Forbidden to Germany by terms of Treaty of Versailles.

2. Includes *Admiral Graf Spee*, 10,000 tons, launched 1934. It is reported that capital ships D and E, listed at 10,000 tons each, will actually have a displacement of 26,000 tons. Cf. *La Revue Maritime* (Paris), June 1935, p. 840; *The Times*, July 9, 1935.

3. Cruiser *Nürnberg*, began trials on September 10, 1935. *New York Times*, September 12, 1935.

4. Composed of heavy cruisers (denied Germany under Versailles Treaty), 51,380 tons; light cruisers, 67,270 tons.

5. Or 23,700 tons if it is decided to build up to 45 per cent of the British strength.

British reaction to the conclusion of the agreement was mixed, but on the whole favorable. The government represented it as a great step toward naval disarmament, inasmuch as it would "prepare

the way for the holding of a general naval conference" by furnishing "a fixed point of departure for further discussions with other Powers."<sup>35</sup> According to some critics, however, Germany appeared

29. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles Germany was forbidden to possess submarines.

30. Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 303, No. 119, June 25, 1935, pp. 952-53. Part IV of the London Naval Treaty provides that the signatories accept as an established rule of international law the following: "... in their action with regard to merchant ships, submarines must conform to the rules of International Law to which surface vessels are subject," in particular with regard to the safety of passengers and crew. This provision, which would render impossible what is known as unrestricted submarine warfare, has remained a dead letter because it is unacceptable to France and Italy. Sir Bolton went on to state that Germany, like Great Britain, now favored the abolition of submarines if a general agreement to this effect could be concluded. Labor members of Parliament criticized the government's acceptance of the German statement,

asking whether the First Lord thought "that if a nation on the verge of defeat should feel that victory could be obtained by violating a convention that it would stick to it?" "That would mean a policy of despair," Sir Bolton replied, "no treaty could be made with anybody—it would mean returning to jungle rule." *Ibid.*, p. 954.

32. Strength actually in service. Under-age vessels in the German navy totalled only 59,000 tons. League of Nations, *Armaments Year-Book*, 1935, cited, pp. 403, 404, 1011-1013.

33. *Voelkischer Beobachter*, June 21, 1935.

34. For tonnage laid down by principal naval powers since 1922, cf. *Hearing before Subcommittee in Charge of Navy Department Appropriation Bill*, cited, table facing p. 78.

35. Stanley Baldwin, in Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 303, No. 116, June 20, 1935, p. 552.

to have received a free hand to begin a tremendous volume of construction bound to provoke competitive building by Great Britain to preserve parity in modern tonnage in the North Sea. The government, which had pledged itself at London and Stresa to oppose unilateral German rearmament, was also reproached for an act of bad faith in condoning an open breach of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>36</sup> In reply the Cabinet insisted that it had been faced with the "essentially practical problem" of illegal German naval construction. Only by promptly accepting a favorable offer which might not be repeated, it argued, could a dangerous Anglo-German naval competition be avoided.<sup>37</sup>

Publication of the agreement was greeted with a wave of resentment in France, where it was regarded as a wanton betrayal of the united Anglo-French-Italian front established at Stresa.<sup>38</sup> In a note dated June 17, 1935 the Quai d'Orsay strongly objected to the procedure of privately settling questions of general interest to all the signatories of the Versailles Treaty.<sup>39</sup> It expressed its opposition to the consideration of naval armaments apart from a general examination of problems of security. The French government immediately intensified its naval activity. At a meeting of the Naval Committee of the French Chamber of Deputies on June 25, 1935, François Piétri, Minister of Marine, asserted that the rate of French construction would depend on the speed with which the Reich built up its fleet. The Committee adopted a resolution in which it maintained that "the naval agreement concluded between Great Britain and Germany puts an end to the naval conditions of the Treaty of Versailles" and "has as a necessary consequence the total liberty of France in naval affairs until the conclusion of new general agree-

ments." It requested the government to "take all useful measures so that France may constantly have on the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean naval forces sufficient to assure its security."<sup>40</sup> Two days later the Chamber's Finance Committee voted 265,000,000 francs for beginning work on the first new 35,000-ton battleship, the *France*, and it was announced that construction would be rushed. Speaking at the naval base at Brest on June 27, M. Piétri remarked that France would once again have to consider England's construction in fixing its building programs and would build up its capital-ship tonnage to a larger proportion of the total tonnage of the fleet.<sup>41</sup>

#### SEA POWER IN THE BALTIC

During the period of German and Soviet naval weakness Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark were permitted seventeen years of effortless security on the seas. Now these countries are most immediately threatened by accelerated German naval activities. Even before the conclusion of the Anglo-German agreement, the Scandinavian countries became alarmed at reports that the Nazi government was fortifying the strategically situated island of Sylt, off the Danish west coast,<sup>42</sup> while a strong naval, submarine and air base in Kiel harbor was being placed on a war footing.<sup>43</sup> The renewed preponderance of German strength opposite their shores raises serious problems of neutrality and foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Finland, with a relatively conservative government and a legacy of strained relations with the U.S.S.R., is inclined to welcome the German naval renaissance; in the other Scandinavian countries it is expected that the groups which have unsuccessfully demanded larger naval and air forces in past years will be strengthened.<sup>45</sup> Since Denmark and Sweden would find it impossible to match German construction, they are following the customary course of "defensive" naval strategy: an increase in the number of lighter vessels, submarines and aircraft. Denmark contemplates the establishment of a submarine and air base, which, by its strategic position at the entrance to the Baltic, could harass German commercial and

36. *Ibid.*, Vol. 304, No. 131, July 11, 1935, p. 548; Vol. 304, No. 138, July 22, 1935, pp. 1497 ff.

37. Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, *ibid.*, Vol. 303, No. 117, June 21, 1935, pp. 710-11; Sir Samuel Hoare, *ibid.*, Vol. 304, No. 131, July 11, 1935, p. 510.

38. *Le Temps* (Paris), June 20, 1935 and following issues; *Lu* (Paris), June 21, 28, 1935.

39. For contents of note, cf. *The Times*, June 19, 1935. Although familiar with the German demands, the French were unaware that a final agreement was being sought. Paris knew that Sir John Simon had been informed of the German naval demands in his conversations with Hitler on March 26, 1935; the German offer was publicly made by the *Fuehrer* on May 21, 1935; and London requested French views on June 7. Cf. *The Times*, March 27, 1935; *Le Temps*, April 30, 1935; speech of Lord Londonderry, quoted in *L'Europe Nouvelle*, July 20, 1935, special supplement, "La politique étrangère britannique." Much of the resentment in Paris was undoubtedly due to what was regarded as cavalier treatment of the French note of June 17, followed as it was by publication of the Anglo-German naval agreement twenty-four hours later.

40. *Le Temps*, June 27, 1935.

41. *L'Europe Nouvelle*, July 20, 1935, special supplement.

42. *Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette* (London), May 2, 1935, p. 366.

43. *Le Temps*, May 13, 1935.

44. For discussion of this point, cf. "Sea Power in the Baltic," *The Times*, July 6, 1935.

45. Ralph Thompson, "Sea Power in the Baltic," *Current History*, September 1935, p. 662. Signs of an increase in naval appropriations are already evident in Sweden. Cf. *Marine-Rundschau* (Berlin), May 1935, p. 236; *Le Temps*, April 26, 1935.



naval vessels.<sup>46</sup> In Sweden a national defense commission issued a report on August 27, 1935 urging the government to concentrate its resources on the development of light naval forces and recommending an increase of over 100 per cent in first-line air strength during the next seven years.<sup>47</sup> Sweden is also preparing to conduct its foreign trade through the port of Göteborg on the North Sea, in case of hostilities in the Baltic.<sup>48</sup>

Little is known of the Soviet navy, which until recently was described as a weak force made up in the main of old vessels inherited from the Czarist régime.<sup>49</sup> Exposed to a Japanese blockade in the Far East and a German attack in the West, the Soviet Union is reported to have begun a program of submarine and cruiser construction together with modernization of over-age battleships. According to foreign naval correspondents, the Soviet government has just laid down its sixtieth submarine and expects by the beginning of 1937 to have fifty-five of the most modern type in service. The principal Soviet submarine base is at Kronstadt, and it is believed that the U.S.S.R. will answer German naval rearmament by massing submarines and detachments of the powerful Soviet air force on the shores of the Gulf of Finland.<sup>50</sup>

## NAVAL POWER IN THE PACIFIC

The interdependence of national policies and naval strategy is perhaps clearer in the Pacific than in the European area, where the multiplicity and complexity of the issues involved sometimes conceal the real bases of conflict. Since 1932, when the establishment of the puppet state of Manchoukuo and the extension of Japanese influence into North China upset the political settlement reached at Washington in 1922, the conflicting aims of Japan and the United States have been reflected in the sphere of naval questions.

What is at issue in the Far East is the establishment of Japanese hegemony, to the virtual exclusion of Western political and economic influence. According to a statement of the Tokyo Foreign Office on April 18, 1934—the high water mark of Japanese claims—Japan has a “special position and mission” in China. “To keep peace and order in East Asia,” it was stated, “she must act single-handed, on her own responsibility. Japan

considers that no other country except China is in a position to share that responsibility.”<sup>51</sup> American and British protests at this disclosure were met in Tokyo with assurances that Japan recognized its general treaty obligations and the principle of the open door. The statement of April 18, however, was never repudiated or explicitly withdrawn.<sup>52</sup>

The United States has consistently refused to admit Japan's right to a special position in the Far East.<sup>53</sup> Following the statement of April 18, 1934, the American government informed the Japanese Foreign Minister that “in the opinion of the American people and the American Government, no nation can, without the assent of the other nations concerned, rightfully endeavor to make conclusive its will in a situation where there are involved the rights, the obligations and the legitimate interests of other sovereign States.”<sup>54</sup> On the contrary, the United States insists on the maintenance of “the equilibrium of political and economic rights” established in 1922 with the consent of Japan, which alone permits “naval limitation on the basis of equality of security.”<sup>55</sup> Britain, which has important economic interests in China, stands with the United States in a community of interest against Japan. At the same time, the size of Britain's economic stake and the length of its trade routes make its position far more vulnerable.<sup>56</sup> For this reason, it has generally avoided the outspoken opposition which has characterized American utterances.<sup>57</sup>

## THE LONDON CONVERSATIONS OF 1934

In a vain attempt to end this diplomatic deadlock and prepare for the naval conference scheduled for 1935, conversations were held in London among the Americans, British and Japanese during June and July 1934, and intermittently from October 23 through December 19, 1934. All efforts by the British to find common ground for compromise between the two principal antagonists proved

46. *Le Temps*, May 13, 1935.

47. *The Times*, August 28, 1935; *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, August 30, 1935.

48. *The Times*, July 6, 1935.

49. Cf. League of Nations, *Armaments Year-Book*, 1935, cited, pp. 841-43.

50. *Le Temps*, July 26, 1935; *New York Times*, July 26, 1935.

51. Japan, it was further stated, would oppose technical or financial assistance to China or commercial transactions with that nation which “threaten to disturb the peace of East Asia.” For text of statement, cf. *New York Herald Tribune*, April 18, 1934.

52. W. W. Willoughby, *The Sino-Japanese Controversy and the League of Nations* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), pp. 629 ff.

53. Cf. State Department, *Press Releases*, January 7, 1932; December 6, 1934.

54. Substance of statement, State Department, *Press Releases*, April 30, 1934.

55. Statement of Norman H. Davis, London, December 6, 1934, State Department, *Press Releases*, December 6, 1934.

56. Cf. H. Th. de Booy, “The Naval Arm of Diplomacy in the Pacific,” *Pacific Affairs*, March 1935, p. 5.

57. Cf. Sir Samuel Hoare, Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 304, No. 131, July 11, 1935, pp. 509 ff.



fruitless. Japan's delegates asked as a *sine qua non* "abolition of the ratio principle hitherto in force and the establishment of a common upper limit for the Powers concerned."<sup>58</sup> To defend its position in the Orient, Japan insists on parity in global tonnage, which would enable each power to allot its tonnage to any category of vessel in any amount desired.<sup>59</sup> To eliminate aggressive war in regions far from home bases, moreover, Japan advocates "total abolition or drastic limitation of offensive arms so as to free each power from the menace of other powers."<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, it proposes to abolish aircraft carriers and capital ships and reduce the number of 10,000-ton, 8-inch-gun cruisers.<sup>61</sup> This program, the Japanese assert, would render each power secure in the area close to its shores and satisfy Japan's national dignity. Opposition to the 5:3 ratio, once accepted as sufficient for Japan's needs, is explained by the technologic development of naval science—increased speed, lengthened cruising radii, longer firing range, and the progress of naval aviation.<sup>62</sup>

Were these suggestions adopted, Japan would become strategically unassailable in the Orient.<sup>63</sup> If, moreover, American naval policy were based solely on the protection of its Continental territories, it would be difficult to refute the Japanese contention. But that policy, as expounded by the General Board of the United States Navy, also includes maintenance of the navy "in sufficient strength to support the national policies and commerce" of the United States.<sup>64</sup> The thesis of "equality of security" to maintain the Far Eastern balance of power clearly implies American sea strength

capable of offering a potential threat to Japan in the Western Pacific. American demands, although couched in general terms, are in fact such as to permit operations at great distance from home bases. To preserve "equality of security" the United States favors the continuance of the present ratios, failing a strictly proportionate reduction in all three fleets.<sup>65</sup> American naval authorities assert their higher ratio is necessitated by two great ocean fronts and the need for adequate defense of the Panama Canal. They are willing to support Britain's claim to a tonnage greater than that of Japan because the former must patrol the seas of the world to defend its imperial interests in time of war.<sup>66</sup> Contrary to the point of view of both British and Japanese, however, the United States opposes reduction of the size of ships permitted under the present system of categories. Because the United States, under the Washington Naval Treaty, has no strong bases west of Hawaii, the Navy claims it needs ships of long cruising range and great invulnerability, which can be provided only by the addition of weight.<sup>67</sup> It thus supports the retention of the large capital ship, the aircraft carrier, and the heavy 8-inch-gun cruiser, all well adapted to long-range conflict.<sup>68</sup>

#### THE BRITISH PROPOSAL

Concerned at the possibility of unrestricted Japanese naval building, Britain first centered its efforts on the formulation of a mutually acceptable compromise. To circumvent the thorny issue of parity, Sir John Simon, British Foreign Secretary, endeavored to induce the United States to recognize the principle of parity for Japan, provided the latter agreed not to build up to the common upper limit for the duration of the new agreement.<sup>69</sup> The other points in the British proposal, designed to settle technical questions by mutual adjustment, were reported to be:

1. The granting of 70 cruisers to Britain, instead of the 50 permitted under the Treaty of London. Britain has always regarded a large cruiser force

58. Koki Hirota, Japanese Foreign Minister, speaking before the Imperial Diet at Tokyo, November 30, 1934, *Trans-Pacific* (Tokyo), December 6, 1934.

59. Captain Tamon Yamaguchi, naval attaché to the Embassy of Japan, *Japan's Stand on Naval Disarmament* (Washington, 1934), p. 7.

60. Koki Hirota before Imperial Diet, January 22, 1935, *New York Times*, January 22, 1935.

61. Hiroshi Saito, *Japan's Policies and Purposes* (Boston, Marshall Jones, 1935), pp. 8, 9. These categories, because of their wide radius of action, are termed "offensive" by the Japanese. Submarines, on the contrary, are regarded "defensive" as against an enemy fleet. Yamaguchi, *Japan's Stand on Naval Disarmament*, cited, p. 9.

62. Saito, *Japan's Policies and Purposes*, cited, pp. 10-11.

63. Observers are agreed that the United States cannot successfully subdue Japan with the treaty ratio of 5:3.5, even granted the use of potential Western Pacific naval bases immobilized under the Washington Naval Treaty. H. C. Bywater, "Japanese and American Naval Power in the Pacific," *Pacific Affairs*, July 1935, pp. 168-75. Japanese and American authorities agree that the present Japanese naval strength is considerably more than 70 per cent of that of the United States. Cf. *Hearing before Subcommittee in Charge of Navy Department Appropriation Bill*, cited, p. 78; Viscount Makoto Saito, "This Question of Naval Control," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 28, 1934. What gives Japanese strategists pause is the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation against Japan.

64. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Fiscal Year 1933* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1933), p. 34.

65. Statement of Norman H. Davis at London, cited. On August 1, 1934 Secretary of the Navy Swanson proposed a 20 per cent reduction in the strengths of the three major fleets. *New York Times*, August 2, 1934. This offer, with some modifications, was apparently repeated during the naval conversations. *The Times*, November 3, 1934.

66. Admiral William V. Pratt, "The 1935 Naval Conference," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1934, p. 551.

67. Admiral William V. Pratt, "Pending Naval Questions," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1935, pp. 414-17.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *The Times*, November 23, 1934.

essential for the protection of its trade routes. As Anglo-American differences faded into the background in the face of Japanese intransigence, the United States appeared inclined to accept this demand, provided it received an equivalent concession.

2. The size of future battleships to be limited to 30,000 tons. Considerations of economy have led the British to advocate reduction in the size of future capital ships to 25,000 tons, while the Japanese have urged their total abolition. The United States has insisted on the 35,000-ton vessel as the only one suitable for its purposes.<sup>70</sup>

This proposal failed when the Japanese delegation refused to commit Japan to refrain from building up to a common upper limit.<sup>71</sup> Following this rejection, the British gravitated noticeably to the side of the United States. When an inconclusive communiqué marked the failure of the London conversations on December 19, 1934, Sir John Simon came definitely to the support of the American thesis. "We feel," he declared, "that, in view of our greater range of responsibilities, including, as they do, Europe as well as Asia, and in view of the vast extent of our sea communications, a British navy that is comparatively larger is necessary in order to preserve in practice equality of security."<sup>72</sup> As the European situation became more serious and the United Kingdom found it necessary to concentrate its naval strength in European waters, London showed a decided tendency to solicit American assistance in the Far East. Repeated feelers for cooperation to preserve peace in the Pacific met with guarded approval in official circles at Washington.<sup>73</sup>

When it became apparent that there was no possibility of reaching an accord similar in nature to the present treaties, Great Britain, as the only power with a primary interest in both the European and Pacific areas, moved to discover a new basis for agreement. Entirely abandoning the ratio system as debasing to the national pride of some nations, the British on July 22, 1935 proposed a series of bilateral conversations in the course of which the powers would seek mutual adjustment of building

programs until 1942.<sup>74</sup> The American program to bring its fleet to treaty strength will be completed in that year, and the 5:5:3:5 ratio attained, in default of British and Japanese construction beyond replacements. The British proposal, however, has been coldly received. France, eager to retain its present advantage over the Reich, has refused to disclose its program until informed of the rate of German construction.<sup>75</sup> Japan, although it welcomed Britain's abolition of the principle of ratios, has intimated that it regards the British proposal as a continuance of the ratio system without the name.<sup>76</sup>

Britain's attempts to sound the leading naval powers on their attitude towards the convocation of a naval conference in 1935 have also met with a discouraging response.<sup>77</sup> The French approved the suggestion, provided the ground were sufficiently prepared beforehand—an insurmountable reservation in the present state of naval affairs.<sup>78</sup> On August 22, 1935 Japan reiterated its refusal to take part in conversations or reveal its construction program until a common upper limit is fixed.<sup>79</sup>

#### JAPANESE-AMERICAN COMPETITION

With the prospects for naval limitation slight, American and Japanese authorities have increased the pace of their preparations to provide for contingencies. Both fleets have held maneuvers close to the international date line: the United States in May 1935, and the Japanese in July and August. American naval appropriations for the fiscal year 1936 reached a new high of \$460,000,000,<sup>80</sup> with indications that the ultimate annual cost of maintaining a treaty navy would reach \$550,000,000.<sup>81</sup> Twenty-four new vessels will be laid down this year, including one 15,000-ton aircraft carrier, two light cruisers, fifteen destroyers and six submarines—a program which will bring the United States to treaty strength in battleships, cruisers and aircraft carriers.<sup>82</sup> The Navy may also request funds for one battleship to be started early in 1937, to begin the gradual replacement of over-age capital ships.<sup>83</sup> Finally, the unsurpassed naval aviation establishment of the United States is being rapidly aug-

70. *New York Times*, November 16, 1934.

71. *The Times*, November 21, 1934.

72. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1934. It was also reported that the American delegation received private assurance that the British would not abandon the 5:5:3 principle. *New York Times*, December 20, 1934.

73. For full exposition of a British point of view on this subject, cf. address of General Jan Christian Smuts, *The Times*, February 11, 1935. The exchange of assurances of cooperation for the maintenance of peace is reproduced in *New York Times*, November 24, 1934; May 28-30, 1935; State Department, *Press Releases*, May 29, 1935; *The Times*, July 12, 1935.

74. Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 304, No. 138, July 22, 1935, pp. 1536-37.

75. *The Times*, August 10, 1935.

76. *Trans-Pacific*, August 1, 1935, pp. 14, 15.

77. *The Times*, August 16, 1935.

78. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1935.

79. *Ibid.*, August 23, 27, 1935; *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, Tokyo, August 29, 1935, p. 282.

80. *Public Law No. 163*, approved June 24, 1935.

81. *Hearing before Subcommittee in Charge of Navy Department Appropriation Bill*, cited, pp. 53, 54.

82. Navy Department, *Press Release*, June 26, 1935.

83. *New York Times*, July 11, 1935. Seven will be over-age when the treaties expire.

mented.<sup>84</sup> The Navy's authorized complement of planes, set at 1,000 in 1926, was increased to 1,910 in 1934—this strength to be attained between 1939 and 1941.<sup>85</sup> In addition, legislation has been adopted which permits the United States to establish army air bases in the Aleutian Islands,<sup>86</sup> while the government is aiding in the establishment of a commercial airline across the Pacific via Hawaii, Midway, Wake, Guam and the Philippines.<sup>87</sup>

In Japan naval appropriations for 1935-1936 rose to the record sum of 529,683,000 yen, an increase of 41,000,000 yen over the previous year.<sup>88</sup> Naval estimates for 1936-1937 were expected to top 600,000,000 yen.<sup>89</sup> The Japanese naval minister has intimated that a new building program might be necessary in 1937-1938.<sup>90</sup> Although it does not approach the American strength, the Japanese naval air force is reported to have embarked on a program of expansion from 400 to about 1,000 planes.<sup>91</sup> Japan denies that it has illegally fortified the Pacific islands which it holds under mandate from the League of Nations.<sup>92</sup> The Permanent Mandates Commission, however, has indicated its dissatisfaction with Japanese explanations of its expenditures for port developments in these islands.<sup>93</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Balked in its attempts to prepare for a naval conference, Britain has apparently abandoned hope for anything but a makeshift arrangement to limit competition. It now appears possible that the conference itself will be quietly permitted to lapse.<sup>94</sup> The atmosphere of crisis which has become chronic in Europe and the Far East obviously precludes serious efforts to curb an armaments race. The world is instead confronted by the possibility of two dangerous forms of naval competition—quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative competition is in a sense actually fostered by the ratio system which emphasizes gradients of strength. In a world apparently dominated by intense nationalism and conflicting national policies, it is no more than natural that inferior ratios should cause irritation among the lesser naval powers. Considerations of policy and pres-

tige have led Italy to claim equality with France, which in turn demands for its fleet a higher ratio with respect to the leading navies of the world. Similarly, Japan demands parity with Great Britain and the United States, which have adopted the principle for themselves but refuse to extend it to others. Where relative claims are so clearly defined, action by one country is certain to be reflected in the naval policies of its rivals. In Europe, Germany's rearmament has provided the immediate impetus for increased naval activity; Japan's imperial designs have had the same effect in the Pacific. In both regions an ascending spiral of naval armaments appears imminent, with limits set only by financial considerations. France is determined to preserve a margin of superiority over Germany and may thus provoke competitive building in Italy. Britain, unwilling to abandon the present two-power standard, may begin a program of ship construction which would again clear the way for additional German tonnage under the terms of the Anglo-German naval agreement and bring about a repetition of the whole process. Increased British construction, moreover, is virtually certain to be followed by American action to maintain a navy second to none. Even if the European naval scene remained quiescent, the avowed determination of the United States to preserve the existing treaty ratios would lead to competition with Japan. The Roosevelt administration, while less inclined than its predecessor to make diplomatic protests, has already proved more willing to strengthen its navy.

To this danger of quantitative competition there must be added the probability of another form of rivalry. If no agreement is reached to preserve the present system of ship categories, new and larger vessels designed to outclass the treaty types will render large numbers of ships obsolete at one stroke. A possible basis for continued limitation is mere qualitative restriction, without quantitative limits. Japan, however, refuses to consider this suggestion until its demand for parity is conceded.<sup>95</sup> Should the naval treaties expire without being replaced by any agreement, the only collective experiment in disarmament will have succumbed to the forces which lead to war.

84. For a discussion of American pre-eminence in naval aviation, cf. *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1935, cited, pp. 167 ff.

85. The number to be constructed in the current fiscal year is 555. *Hearing before Subcommittee in Charge of Navy Department Appropriation Bill*, cited, pp. 499, 508, 509.

86. *Public Law No. 263*, approved August 12, 1935.

87. The sum of \$1,000,000 has been appropriated as a mail subsidy. *Public Law No. 260*, approved August 12, 1935.

88. *Trans-Pacific*, January 10, 1935, pp. 9, 14.

89. *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, June 27, 1935, p. 822.

90. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1935, p. 208.

91. *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1935, cited, p. 171.

92. Paul H. Clyde, *Japan's Pacific Mandate* (New York, Macmillan, 1935), Chapter XIII.

93. League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Session*, October 29-November 12, 1934 (Geneva, 1934), C.489.M.214.1934.VI, pp. 93, 94, 96, 206.

94. It is reported that Italy has accepted the British bid to a 1935 naval conference, despite the tense Mediterranean naval situation. *New York Times*, October 8, 1935.

95. *The Times*, August 27, 1935.

# NAVIES OF THE WORLD\*

	Total built		Total built under age <sup>1</sup>		Building and appropriated for <sup>2</sup>		Additional permitted by treaty to be laid down before December 31, 1936
	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	Tons
UNITED STATES							
Capital ships	15	464,300	12	384,200	.....	.....	000
Aircraft carriers	4	92,000	3	80,500	3	54,500	000
Cruisers (a)	16	149,775	15	142,425	3	30,000	000
Cruisers (b)	10	70,500	10	70,500	9	90,000	000
Destroyers	211	238,315	6	8,285	55	87,050	51,765
Submarines	84	70,020	43	45,600	16	21,600	19,160
TOTAL	340	1,084,910	89	731,510	86	283,150	70,925
BRITISH EMPIRE							
Capital ships	15	474,750	15	474,750	.....	.....	000
Aircraft carriers	6	115,350	6	115,350	1	15,000	19,100
Cruisers (a)	19	183,396	18	173,400	.....	.....	000
Cruisers (b)	33	166,210	17	96,390	15	113,800	28,160
Destroyers	165	192,369	56	75,394	32	43,690	39,282
Submarines	56	56,209	36	44,954	10	10,905	4,081
TOTAL	294	1,188,284	148	980,238	58	183,395	90,623
JAPAN							
Capital ships	9	272,070	8	242,740	.....	.....	000
Aircraft carriers	4	68,370	4	68,370	2	20,050	50
Cruisers (a)	14	123,520	12	107,800	.....	.....	000
Cruisers (b)	20	93,375	17	81,455	6	51,000	000
Destroyers	102	123,313	63	86,213	20	28,957	1,500 <sup>4</sup>
Submarines	57	68,349	49	61,837	13	17,700	528
TOTAL	206	748,997	153	648,415	41	117,707	2,078
FRANCE							
Capital ships	9	185,925	3	66,567	4	123,000	52,000
Aircraft carriers	1	22,146	1	22,146	.....	.....	37,854
Cruisers (a)	10	105,923	7	70,000	.....	.....	Not Limited
Cruisers (b)	8	51,814	6	38,902	6	45,600	Not Limited
Destroyers	80	123,219	56	105,431	18	20,435	Not Limited
Submarines	97	83,890	69	64,183	14	14,556	Not Limited
TOTAL	205	572,917	142	367,229	42	203,591	
ITALY							
Capital ships	4	86,532	3	64,714	2	70,000	105,000
Aircraft carriers	0	000	0	000	.....	.....	60,000
Cruisers (a)	11	103,641	7	70,000	.....	.....	Not Limited
Cruisers (b)	16	71,183	12	59,067	3	22,539	Not Limited
Destroyers	88	91,488	55	63,475	10	8,778	Not Limited
Submarines	69	45,720	48	37,550	8	8,917	Not Limited
TOTAL	188	398,564	125	294,806	23	110,234	
GERMANY							
Capital ships	8	98,084	2	20,000	3	62,000	By agreement with British Empire limited to 35% of aggregate tonnage of all ships of British Empire.
Aircraft carriers	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	
Cruisers (a)	.....	.....	.....	.....	2	20,000	
Cruisers (b)	8	40,040	5	30,000	1	6,000	
Destroyers	32	23,091	12	9,600	16	26,000	
Submarines	1	500	1	500	27	9,000	
TOTAL	49	161,715	20	60,100	49	123,000	

\*Source: Office of Naval Intelligence, Washington, July 24, 1935.

1. Age as at the end of 1934 (December 31, 1934).

2. All tonnages under column *Building and Appropriated For* are estimated.

3. May also replace *Furious*, *Eagle* and *Hermes* (experimental ships).

4. Available to replace *Miyuki* sunk about July 1, 1934.